

Particular Baptist
OBSERVATIONS
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ON THE
VINDICATION

OF A
L E T T E R
TO THE *England. — Churches.*
CALVINISTIC BAPTISTS. —

OF THE
WESTERN ASSOCIATION,

ON THE SUBJECT OF
UNSCRIPTURAL DOXOLOGIES.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

By a Member of the Association.

How forcible are right Words! — But what doth YOUR
ARGUING prove? *JOB.*

L O N D O N :

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OBSERVATIONS, &c.

Dear SIR,

THE Author of the Vindication of a Letter to the Western Association, on the subject of what he calls unscriptural doxologies, in answer to my Remarks on his first performance, can never expect me to reply to him; as he has not answered in any degree what I have already advanced, and therefore to offer any thing more to the public upon the subject, would only be, as I might express it to one who appears still so fond of Latin scraps, *agere actum*, to do what is already done. But if you think proper to publish the following cursory observations upon this his second performance, you are at liberty to do as you please.

No one can read this Vindication, without observing how grossly the Author of it mistakes the question in debate. It is not, whether scriptural or unscriptural doxologies

ought to be used, for we deem *our* doxologies strictly scriptural; much less, for the same reason, is the question which are preferable; and least of all therefore whether we are justified in *resisting* scriptural doxologies and establishing unscriptural ones in their stead; all this was, as he well knows, expressly disavowed in my former publication. The only point at issue, to adopt his own phrase, is this; whether we are confined to the *very words* of scripture in the doxologies or *conclusions* of our prayers, any more than in the *beginning* of them, or in any other part of them. If we are, we ask where is the *precept* binding this upon us; why does not the Author of the Letter produce it? I have called upon him for it, but he knows no such precept is to be found; and yet he has the modesty to go on charging his brethren with acting contrary to PRECEPT as well as precedent, because they do not think themselves bound to obey his mandates. And as to *precedent*, we have no other than we have for other
other

other parts of prayer; so that all the artillery discharged upon us by the Letter Writer, bears upon himself as much as it does upon us. And yet would not he smile think you at the weakness of a writer who should put on a grave face, cite him to the bar of judgment, charge him with sanctifying the worst of heresies, a departure from the *express declaration of God's will*, and with thinking his own phrases *better upon the whole* than those of men divinely inspired, — because in the beginning of his prayers he did not always adore God in the *very words* of scripture?

It must be obvious to every man of candor and impartiality, that not one tittle advanced by the Letter Writer against his brethren's unscriptural doxologies, applies to them, more than it does to him for his *unscriptural* invocations and adorations.

His curious distinction of those parts of prayer which are expressive of the *mutability* of the creature, and those which relate to the *immutability* of God, will not avail him. For

surely our adorations of God in the beginning of our prayers relate as much to the immutability of God, as our ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving at the conclusion of our prayers; and there is therefore as much reason we should be confined to the *very words* of scripture in the one as in the other. The case is so plain, that I would willingly rest the decision of it with Dr. Priestley himself, as he is a gentleman of too much openness and candor to avail himself of the little arts of chicanery, to support an hypothesis. He would condemn Trinitarian worship no doubt, because he judges the doctrine of the Trinity to be unscriptural; but he would not condemn such worship merely because it was not expressed in the *very words* of scripture; nor would he condemn those as inconsistent and impious, who verily believed the doctrine of the Trinity to be a scripture doctrine, because in their prayers they made use of such expressions as implied that belief. Much less would he after having said all which this

Writer

Writer has in his former Letter about the Trinity and the atonement; * endeavour to make the world think he still believed both. It is of little moment to me or to the world what may be the religious sentiments of the Author of the Letter to the Association, but surely it sounds strange to hear the same person who has said such things as he has in his Letter, about the Trinity and the atonement, make such a declaration as the following, in his vindication of that very Letter. See p. 14.

“ The writer of the Letter to the Baptists
 “ is as firm in the belief of the scripture doc-
 “ trine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
 “ and of the glorious doctrine of our recon-
 “ ciliation to God by the death of his Son,
 “ as any one of the members of the Western
 “ Association.”

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However

* In his Vindication, he represents me as having *introduced* these subjects in my Remarks, and very gravely informs the public that I am not competent to the discussion of them; whereas I only followed him in my Remarks on what *he* had said on these subjects, to which he has not replied.

However if so, The only point then in dispute betwixt us is, whether we may or may not lawfully *express* what *we believe* in our addressees to the great object of our worship? And one would think this point no one would dispute. Socinians and Calvinists profess to receive the same bible, and if they are not at liberty to express in their own words the different meaning they affix to the words of scripture, how are their different sentiments to be known, much less examined and canvassed?

In reply to what I urged from the form of baptism, as exhibiting to us an example of the solemn worship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Vindicator observes that the Israelites are said to have been baptized unto Moses; and then exultingly asks, if they were hereby obligated to pay the same divine honours to Moses as to God? But does this Writer need to be told that the Israelites were not baptized really, but only figuratively, because there was some resemblance betwixt the ordinance

nance of baptism and their passing through the sea under the conduct of Moses? But had it been real baptism, their being baptized unto Moses would not have been the same as their being baptized, as the Vindicator affirms, *into the name of Moses*; and much less would it have been a parallel case with Christian baptism into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, unless the Israelites had been baptized into the name of the eternal Jehovah and Moses, Moses and God being joined together in the same act of worship. That Christian baptism is a solemn act of divine worship as it relates to the Father, all must allow, and in that same act of worship, it is a fact that the Son and Holy Ghost are joined with the Father. And is it not singular, this matter should be controverted by one who professes to believe the scripture doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as firmly as any one of the members of the Western Association?

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The Vindicator amuses his readers with a splendid exhibition of a scriptural doxology in contrast with what he represents as my unscriptural one. But with equal propriety might he have set one of the other doxologies which are found in scripture, in opposition to that which he has exhibited. He knows very well that we none of us object to any doxology in scripture, and are far from setting up our own in *opposition* to them ; we think our doxologies strictly scriptural, and use our own words because we think it right to bear testimony to what we esteem the scripture doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in opposition to those who would hide this truth under the supposed ambiguity of scripture phrases, the meaning of which they think themselves at liberty to interpret as they please. As to the scripture doxologies themselves, they seem not at all adapted to secure religious worship to the Father only, to the exclusion of the Son, as they ascribe praise, in many instances, to the Son only,

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and evidently go upon the supposition that he and his Father are one, and that it is the duty of all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

But let this Writer manœuvre as he will, the only point in dispute is, are we or are we not confined to the *very words* of scripture, for to the sense and meaning of scripture we are certainly confined, in the whole of our religious services as well as in our doxologies; but are we confined in our doxologies to scripture *words* only, or are we not? If we are, let the precept, as I have before said, be produced by which we are so confined, and whether the precept be deemed *moral* or *positive*, we will give the matter up. But till such precept is produced, it is to the Letter Writer's disgrace, not our's, to raise an outcry against us as departing from the *direct instructions* of the Bible in the most important parts of religion, and in opposition to both PRECEPT and precedent. We defy him to produce any precept, or any precedent
for

for one part of prayer more than for another; and unless he could do this, what doth his arguing prove? Is it lawful for us to judge of scripture ideas, and is it unlawful for us to express those ideas in opposition to those who deny the truth of them? If the matter be fairly stated, there cannot be two opinions respecting it.

I cannot help observing further the shameful unfairness of the Vindicator in his observations upon the passage he quotes from one of our Association Letters. The passage itself asserts no more than that there is greater *danger* of our being led away by the errors of men of fair moral characters, than by those of openly bad men. The celebrated Mr. Hume, the sceptic, for instance, was a man of the most amiable deportment and engaging manners, and therefore there was the more danger of young people's imbibing the deadly poison of his pernicious errors. And yet in such a case as this, all the Association Letter recommends is, to be upon our guard *till we have examined*

examined every proposal made to us. Is there any thing in all this like asserting that the speculative errors of virtuous men are GREATER EVILS than blasphemy, profanation, &c. — They are more *dangerous* evils, because we are more likely to be infected by them, from the plausibility of character in those that profess them; but as to the greatness of the evils themselves, that must depend upon the effects ultimately produced by them; a subject, which the Association Letter does not enter upon.

The Vindication of the obnoxious passage, in which the Author of the Letter to the Calvinistic Baptists had charged his brethren with countenancing what *they knew* to be *wrong*, for fear of being styled *heretics*, and *losing the rewards of a spurious misguided zeal*, is so curious, that I have not a single observation to make upon it, but leave it to the profound cogitations of those readers who may be so fortunate as to understand it. All I could wish is, that the Vindicator had put the passage

sage itself in one column, and his vindication of it in another, that the beauty of the text and glossary might appear at one view. I am obliged however to the Vindicator for giving leave to those who are not satisfied with his vindication of the passage to consider it as *incorrect*; and in my turn am very willing to recognize his *right*, which he so solemnly asserts, to say what he please, provided he accedes to *my right* of thinking and speaking as I please of what he says.

But when he tickles up the Monthly Reviewers, and plumes himself upon their testimony in his favour, with respect to the obnoxious passage in question, he has the misfortune of being again somewhat *incorrect*. So far is it from being certain that they *did not*, as the Vindicator affirms, understand the passage as I did, and as the Analytical Reviewers did, that it happens to be certain that *they did* so understand it. For though they had inadvertently said that the Author of the Letter appeared to write with candor, yet
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when the obnoxious passage was pointed out to them as a proof of his want of candor, they make this apology for him, that candor itself cannot be so blind as not to see that there are TRIMMERS. They do not pretend to assert that he had not called his brethren *Trimmers*, but represent it as a fact too palpable for Candor to wink at. See M. Review for May, p. 472.

I am greatly obliged to the Vindicator for his pity, and recommending the Association to chuse another advocate, as I confess I am heartily tired of the tedious employment of untwisting the cobweb'd sophistry of so very unfair a writer.

I remain, Dear Sir,

Your's affectionately,

A Member of the Western Association.

Aug. 18, 1789.

THE END.

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